

Reflecting on our Jubilee
A Small Group Study Series

The URC celebrates its 50th birthday in October 2022. To mark this various writers have contributed to a series of readings, reflections, and prayers which will be distributed through the Daily Devotions email list every morning over the first two weeks of October. Some of these reflections have been used to provide these small group study sessions which will encourage us to reflect, give thanks, and rise to the challenge of being part of the URC in the 21st Century. Each session involves hymns from a variety of URC writers to help us reflect.

Session 4 Reforming in Ordinary

Hymn

Come sing of our God

© Anne J. Sardeson 2012 Tune *The Bard of Armagh (RS 583)*

Come sing of our God who is always before us:
calling and guiding us through the unknown.
Come sing of our God who is always before us:
harvesting fruit from the seeds long past sown.

2: Come sing of our God,
who is always behind us:
keeping a past we will never forget.
Come sing of our God who is always behind us:
holding with care all that we might regret.

3: Come sing of our God who is always beside us:
Source of our hope in the plans that we make.
Come sing of our God who is always beside us:
Ground of our being: the Road that we take!

4: Come sing of our God
who is always around us:
On distant horizon, in quiet whispered word.
Come sing of our God who is always around us:
Lifting our lives with a song not yet heard.

St John 6:1-14

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?' He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, 'Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.' One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?' Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.' So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.'

Reflection

Questions

- David Cornick contrasts the great and the good who are noticed by Church historians and the ordinary saints who escape such attention. Who are the ordinary saints in your congregation?
- What ordinary things could you do with your congregation to make a difference in the lives of its members and your local community?

Prayer

Gracious God

Your love has touched the URC and called forth disciples.

We give thanks for those who have been examples to us,
who helped us on the journey of faith
and opened windows into the wonder of your kingdom.

Take our loaves and fishes,
and transform them into your people's nourishment,
that they may speak your Word,
that the world may know Christ as Lord
and return to You in praise and thanksgiving. Amen.

Hymn *Eternal God, Your Love's Tremendous Glory*

Alan Gaunt (1935 -) © 1991 Stainer & Bell Ltd Tune: Charterhouse

Eternal God, your love's tremendous glory
cascades through life in overflowing grace,
to tell creation's meaning in the story
of love evolving love from time and space.

2: Eternal Son of God, uniquely precious,
in you, deserted, scorned and crucified,
God's love has fathomed
sin and death's deep darkness,
and flawed humanity is glorified.

3: Eternal Spirit, with us like a mother,
embracing us in love serene and pure:
you nurture strength to follow Christ our brother,
as full-grown children, confident and sure.

4: Love's trinity, self-perfect, self-sustaining;
love which commands, enables and obeys:
you give yourself,
in boundless joy, creating
one vast increasing harmony of praise.

5: We ask you now, complete your image in us;
this love of yours, our source and guide and goal.
May love in us seek love and serve love's purpose,
till we ascend with Christ and find love whole.

Isaiah 43: 18-19

Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

Isaiah 46: 8-11

Remember this and consider, recall it to mind, you transgressors,
remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My purpose shall stand,
and I will fulfil my intention', calling a bird of prey from the east,
the man for my purpose from a far country.
I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have planned, and I will do it.

Reflection

Questions

- What are the things we've done well over the last 50 years – as a denomination and in your local church?
- What are the things we need to let go of as they tie us down now?

Prayer

Living God,
we give you thanks for the gift of your Spirit:
opening our ears to hear anew;
opening our eyes to see anew;
opening our hearts to you anew.
May we set down the human traditions that hold us back;
treasure the tradition of your Word that leads us on;
be a people who faithfully forget;
and a people who faithfully remember.
In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Hymn

A Glorious Company We Sing

The Rev'd A F Bayly (1901 - 1984) altd.* 570 R&S Tune St Magnus "The Head That once Was Crowned with Thorns" This was written for a celebration, in 1946, at what was then Morpeth Congregational Church.

A glorious company we sing,
the Master and his friends,
he sent them forth to tell his love,
and all his love intends.

2: A faithful company we sing,
the steadfast martyr band;
for Christ & for his kingdom's cause
they boldly made their stand.

3: A loving company we sing,
whom Jesus sent to save
the sick, the hungry and the blind,
the outcast and the slave.

4: We join this glorious company
of Jesus and his friends,
to spread throughout this troubled world
his love that never ends.

St Matthew 28:16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Reflection

Questions

- Given Fiona's words, what gives you hope for the future of our denomination?
- What gives you hope for your local congregation?

Prayer

Holy One, open my mind and heart...
to live from abundance,
to trust in Jesus' message of God's unconditional love for all, and
to be transformed and share in God's work transforming our world. Amen

Hymn Writers

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The Rev'd Alan Gaunt is a retired URC minister living on the Wirral having served in Barrow, Keighley, Sunderland, Heswell, South West Manchester and Windermere.

The Rev'd Albert F. Bayly was born in 1901 in Bexhill on Sea, Sussex. Educated at London University and Mansfield College, he was ordained to the Congregationalist ministry in the late 1920s and died in 1984. He retired in 1971 and was active in his local URC.

Contributors

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